



Save Helvetia
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www.SaveHelvetia.org

DATE: February 7, 2023

TO: Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Senator Findley
Representative Owens

FROM: Save Helvetia

RE: Senate Bill 70

Position on this Bill: Oppose

Testimony:

Save Helvetia is a farmland preservation organization that works to protect the farm and forestlands in Washington County.

Helvetia is far from Malheur County: Why are we stepping into this? It is because our land use laws, procedures and precedents constitute a shared, common treasure that belong to all of the people of the entire State of Oregon. SB 16 asked the Legislative Assembly to act as a real estate broker, carving out "CEO farmsteads" as a lure for economic development. This was at a time when Malheur County had formally determined to explore linkage with the Greater Idaho.

Now comes Malheur County again seeking amendment to SB 16, wanting to pick the riper fruit of “high-value farmland”. This is damaging to our collective high-value farmland. It would give the developers potentially high-value vineyard lands and irrigated, or potentially irrigated agricultural lands, to the development mix. It would give developers incentive to claim this as a precedent elsewhere.

We thought before and we continue to think that Malheur County and City of Ontario should find other means to attract development without violating shared state treasures. Lands are available within Ontario's UGB. Ontario and Malheur County could develop a package of incentives to attract business that doesn't checkerboard the range and farm lands. Inside the city, CEOs would be more likely to become a valuable part of civic life.

As we strive for increased equity in policy making, SB 70 is a throwback to passing a law for an elite few at the expense of many. Don't reward developers with a new opening in their strategies to move onto “higher value” farm and forestlands. Please don't take the barn door off or leave the pasture gate open.

Respectfully,

Cherry Amabisca, President
Save Helvetia

Robert Bailey, Secretary
Save Helvetia

